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Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 IO-14 ACDA-19 DRC-01 /138 W
---------- 038146
R 211818Z JAN 74
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7262
INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
USNAVCOMMSTA LONDONDERRY
AMCONSUL BELFAST

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E. O. 22652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, U. K. (N. I.)
SUBJECT: LOYALISTS LAUNCH PETITION AGAINST COUNCIL OF IRELAND AND EXECUTIVE

FOLLOWING TRANSMITTED BY BELFAST CONSULATE GENERAL:

SUMMARY: LEADERS OF UNITED ULSTER UNIONIST COUNCIL JANUARY 15 SIGNED AND LAUNCHED PETITION REJECTING COUNCIL OF IRELAND AND NORTHERN IRELAND EXECUTIVE. BETWEEN JAN 26 AND FEB 2 THEY HOPE TO COLLECT UP TO 400,000 SIGNATURES, WHICH IAN PAISLEY WILL PRESENT TO WESTMINSTER PARLIAMENT. PETITION LIKELY TO RECEIVE SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF VOLUNTARY SIGNATURES, AND ANNOUNCED GOAL. PETITION IS MODERATE IN TONE AND REPRESENTS EFFORT BY LOYALIST POLITICIANS TO KEEP INITIATIVE FROM PARAMILITARY ELEMENTS. BUT ITS EXPECTED REJECTION BY PARLIAMENT IS LIKELY TO BE READ BY LOYALISTS HERE AS EXHAUSTION OF CONSTITUTIONAL REMEDIES AND JUSTIFICATION FOR EXTRA-CONSTITUTIONAL MEASURES IN DEFENSE OF THEIR CAUSE. END SUMMARY

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1. LOYALISTS JANUARY 15 LAUNCHED A PETITION TO WEST-

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MINSTER PARLIAMENT IN OPPOSITION TO COUNCIL OF IRELAND
AND NORTHERN IRELAND EXECUTIVE.

2. PETITION WAS SIGNED IN GREAT HALL OF STORMONT
PARLIAMENT BUILDING BY NEARLY 30 LOYALIST AND ANTI-
SUNNINGDALE UNIONIST ASSEMBLYMEN AND BY REPRESENTATIVES
OF OTHER LOYALIST ORGANIZATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH NEW
UNITED ULSTER UNIONIST COUNCIL. LOYALIST LEADERS ARE
PUSHING IT IN SERIES OF "SAVE ULSTER NOW" RALLIES
THROUGHOUT PROVINCE, AND SAY THEY HOPE TO OBTAIN
SIGNATURES OF 400,000 VOTERS BETWEEN JANUARY 26 AND
FEBRUARY 2. PETITION WILL BE OPEN FOR SIGNATURE AT
ORANGE HALLS THROUGHOUT PROVINCE. IN HIS ROLE AS
WESTMINSTER M.P. FOR NORTH ANTRIM, REV. IAN PAISLEY WILL
PRESENT IT TO PARLIAMENT.

3. PETITION PROCLAIMS THAT SIGNATORIES ARE "UNALTERABLY
OPPOSED TO, AND DO NOT ACCEPT OR RECOGNIZE, THE VALIDITY
OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND EXECUTIVE." IN MARCH 8, L973,
BORDER POLL VAST MAJORITY OF CITIZENS OF NORTH HAD
INDICATED THEY WANTED TO REMAIN WITHIN U.K., YET "IT
IS PROPOSED TO SET UP A COUNCIL OF IRELAND IN WHICH
REPRESENTATIVES OF A FOREIGN STATE WILL EXERCISE
JUDICIAL POWERS OVER THE CITIZENS OF NORTHERN IRELAND."
PETITIONERS "FIERCELY REJECT" SUCH PROPOSALS AS
INCONSISTENT WITH BORDER POLL AND PRINCIPLE OF SECTION
ONE OF NORTHERN IRELAND CONSTITUTION ACT, AND "HUMBLY
PRAY THAT NORTHERN IRELAND EXECUTIVE BE DISSOLVED,
THERE BEING NO REASONABLE BASIS WITHIN SECTION TWO OF
THE N. I. CONSTITUTION ACT 1973 FOR GOVERNMENT BY
CONSENT."

4. PAISLEY TOLD PRESS AND TV HE WAS HOPING FOR AROUND

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SS-20 USIA-15 IO-14 ACDA-19 DRC-01 /138 W
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R 211818Z JAN 74
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400,000 SIGNATURES, BUT EVEN 300,000 WOULD BE LOYALIST VICTORY SINCE IT WOULD BE INCREASE OVER THE 264,000 WHICH (HE CLAIMED) LOYALISTS RECEIVED IN JUNE L973 ASSEMBLY ELECTION. IF BRITISH GOVERNMENT WERE HONORABLE, IN HIS VIEW, IT WOULD BE PREPARED TO RECOGNIZE FORCE OF LOYALIST ARGUMENTS AND COME TO NEGOTIATING TABLE IMMEDIATELY. EACH OF LOYALIST GROUPS HAD IN MIND ALTERNATIVES TO SUNNINGDALE SETTLEMENT, BUT WOULD NOT REVEAL THESE UNTIL THEY WERE ACTUALLY AT THE TABLE.

5. COMMENTS:
A. THERE ARE ABOUT ONE MILLION VOTERS IN PROVINCE. IN JUNE L973 ELECTION THERE WERE 722,000 VALID VOTES. IF LOYALISTS COLLECTED 400,000 SIGNATURES, THEY WOULD ARGUE THAT MAJORITY OF VOTERS NOW REJECT SUNNINGDALE. 300,000 SIGNATURES COULD BE REPRESENTED AS ADVANCE OVER JUNE L973, AND AS DECISIVE MAJORITY OF PROTESTANT VOTE. NO DOUBT OTHERS WOULD POINT TO OPPORTUNITIES THAT PETITION PROCEDURE OFFERS FOR INTIMIDATION OF SIGNERS. IT IS QUITE LIKELY THAT VERY SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF ELECTORS
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WILL SIGN VOLUNTARILY AND THAT, IN ANY CASE, ORGANIZERS OF PETITION WILL OBTAIN BY HOOK OR CROOK THREE TO FOUR HUNDRED THOUSAND SIGNATURES.

B. USE OF PETITION HARKS BACK TO HISTORIC ANTI-HOME RULE ULSTER COVENANT OF L9L2. ARGUMENT FROM L973 CONSTITUTION ACT (WHICH LOYALISTS REJECT) IS MOST MODERATE AND CONSTITUTIONAL THAT ONE COULD EXPECT TO HEAR FROM THIS SECTION OF ULSTER POPULATION. PETITION IS INTENDED ALSO TO KEEP LOYALIST INITIATIVE IN HANDS OF POLITICIANS RATHER THAN PARAMILITARY ELEMENTS. BUT EXPECTED PARLIAMENTARY REJECTION OF VIEWS OF PETITIONERS WOULD BE INTERPRETED BY LOYALISTS AS EXHAUSTION OF

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CONSTITUTIONAL REMEDIES, AND JUSTIFICATION FOR RESORT TO EXTRA-CONSTITUTIONAL MEASURES IN DEFENSE OF THEIR CAUSE.

ANNENBERG

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: GOVERNMENT REFORM, PARAMILITARY FORCES, POLITICAL STABILITY, PUBLIC ATTITUDES, RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION, POLITICAL LEADERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 JAN 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974LONDON00937
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740128/aaaaazzz.tel
Line Count: 174
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 JUL 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23-Jul-2001 by maustmc>; APPROVED <29 MAY 2002 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

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30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TANTIAL NUMBER OF VOLUNTARY SIGNATURES, AND ANNOUNCED GOAL. PETITION IS MODERATE IN TONE AND
TAGS: PINT, UK
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

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